

Indiana General Assembly Democrats

Indiana House of Representatives

Indiana Senate

January 12, 2005

HOUSE, SENATE DEMS DEPLORE DANIELS' RADICAL ACTION AGAINST STATE WORKERS; ANNOUNCE INTENTIONS TO SEEK LEGISLATIVE RELIEF TO PROTECT WORKER RIGHTS

INDIANAPOLIS – Calling Gov. Mitch Daniels' decision to rescind collective bargaining rights for Indiana state employees a radical, extreme change that will leave the state open to countless lawsuits and cost taxpayers dearly, leading Democrats in the Indiana House and Senate announced today they will pursue legislative action if the governor does not reverse his decision.

Flanked by representatives from the organizations that have represented state workers, State Reps. B. Patrick Bauer (D-South Bend) and Russ Stilwell (D-Boonville) and State Sens. Richard Young (D-Milltown) and Tim Lanane (D-Anderson) said Daniels has destroyed a system that has served the state well over the past 16 years. Gov. Evan Bayh originally granted collective bargaining rights for state employees through executive order in 1989, a move that was continued by Govs. Frank O'Bannon and Joe Kernan.

"Through his executive order, the governor has suspended the rights of those men and women who serve the people of the state of Indiana," Bauer said. "On Monday, he said he valued the work of state employees. On Tuesday, with the swipe of a pen, he removed their rights as workers."

Lanane pointed out that Daniels was ignoring contracts with state workers that were supposed to be in effect until 2007. By failing to honor those agreements, Lanane said the governor was increasing the possibility that the state could be sued.

"These written contracts cannot simply be ignored because the governor chooses not to recognize them," Lanane said. "At some point in time, there will be an effort to use the legal process to secure rights that were a portion of those agreements, and it will be the responsibility of the taxpayers of the state to pay the costs of those court actions."

Bauer and Lanane were disturbed that Daniels proceeded with his decision without comprehensive discussions on the matter with those organizations that represent state workers.

"The chief executive of state government has broken a written promise to protect the men and women who toil selflessly on behalf of the people of Indiana," Lanane said. "I am very disappointed to see that Gov. Daniels has started his term in office by saying one thing, then doing another."

Bauer added, "It is hard for me to understand why a system that has worked so well for 16 years should be unilaterally dismantled, without any thought of the results. These men and women now are going to be forced to fend for themselves when it comes to salaries, health care and insurance. They will have little or no recourse if they are fired unfairly."

Both lawmakers said they would ask Daniels to either rescind Tuesday's order or modify it in order to honor the contracts that had been in place. If that avenue does not succeed, they said they would explore legislative remedies in order to restore rights for workers.

"Since the House and Senate are both under Republican control, it is safe to say that any legislative efforts to restore collective bargaining rights will be a long shot, but we want to make it clear that we are interested in doing all we can for the 25,000 men and women who have lost their rights to seek a decent wage and get proper health care benefits," Bauer said. "The people of Indiana will know who stands in their corner."

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